



# *The Insider*

[www.senate.mi.gov/switalski](http://www.senate.mi.gov/switalski)

## **Inside State Politics with State Senator Mickey Switalski Senate District 10**

**February 17, 2006**

Welcome to the electronic version of *The Insider*. I would like to take the opportunity to thank you for your support and giving me an opportunity to represent you in the Michigan Senate. It is my sincere hope that this bi-weekly e-newsletter will keep you informed of the happenings in Lansing while staying true to the traditional style of *The Insider*. If you would like to contact me, please feel free to e-mail me at [senmswitalski@senate.michigan.gov](mailto:senmswitalski@senate.michigan.gov) or call me at my Roseville or Lansing office. You can also meet me in person during my constituent hours, coming to a library near you. Call my office and make an appointment or just walk in. See schedule for details.

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### **Mickey's Letter Bag: Graduation Requirements**

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Dear Senator Switalski:

I understand that the current House Bill # 5606 has deleted the foreign language requirement. I think that this is a serious omission in light of the global competitive trade in our state. Please give consideration to this when deciding on the future of our students. They need to graduate with many skills including knowledge of foreign language and culture. I am a French teacher and I will tell you that ALL students can learn a foreign language, so arguments that students are not all college prep or "smart enough" to take a foreign language class are misguided.

Sincerely,  
Jane Kort  
Clinton Township

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Dear Senator Switalski:

You mentioned in the February 3rd edition of the *Insider* that you would discuss the Foreign Language requirement of the Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC) proposal in your next newsletter.

I have tried taking a foreign language in high school, college and privately, all without success. While I believe that it is good to be exposed to foreign languages, especially as the world market becomes more global, I also think that it is a mistake to make success in a foreign language a requirement for graduation. Some, like myself, just can't grasp the grammar of foreign languages, especially those with

few rules and lots of memorization!

I have completed my Masters' Degree several years ago and am gainfully employed, which I think proves that I have some intelligence. However, some of us just can't succeed in a foreign language.

Thank you,  
John T. Hannon  
Sterling Heights

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### **Mickey's Blog: Foreign Language Requirement**

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Part of the Governor's proposal for strengthening the high school curriculum is to add a 2-year Foreign Language requirement.

The only college in Michigan that requires two years of a foreign language for admission is the University of Michigan. It is my impression that anyone who wants to go to U of M, one of the top schools in the nation, better have taken as rigorous a curriculum as possible, complete with Advanced Placement classes and math, science, and extra-curricular activities. But for the rest of the students in the state, we should question the requirement carefully.

I spoke to a group of about 75 parents and educators last week in Roseville, and they asked for flexibility in the requirements. Their biggest concern is that kids will be frozen out of the vocational and career prep classes and other electives like arts and band because the mandated curriculum will use up all their class time.

I think they are right. We need to make the requirements flexible enough to where kids can still take these rigorous and valuable career paths. Vocational classes have a lot of math in them, and if you don't think the building trades class is valuable, call me next time you have a plumbing problem.

But we talked about that last issue. This time we are talking about Foreign Language, *n'est pas*?

I was a foreign language major in college. In fact, I got my bachelor's degree in Classical Languages at Louisiana State University. That is ancient Latin and Greek. So I personally saw the value in studying foreign languages. I also took French, German, and Russian. So I am a committed linguist.

But that doesn't mean that we should mandate it for every kid in the state. The House version of the bill has already dropped this requirement, and I think this is an improvement. Furthermore, statistics have proven that the younger the student the more adept they are at learning a foreign language. So if we really want kids to learn a foreign language, we should add it to the grade school curriculum.

There is a need for people with foreign language skills, and students who have the interest and ability would be wise to choose language study. But mandating it for everyone would be unwise.

*Au revoir.*

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## Mickey's TV Insider Show

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Check out my TV Insider Show coming to a television station near you. Watch me interview local guests about politics, life, issues and concerns to our district.

### **Sterling Heights**

Every Saturday and Sunday at 12:30 p.m.  
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

### **Utica**

Every Wednesday at 9 a.m.  
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

### **Clinton Township**

Last week of every month- Sat thru Thurs  
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

### **Roseville**

Various Times  
(Comcast Channel 18)

\*Please note that Sterling Heights/Utica/Clinton Township will show the TV Insider Show on Comcast Channel 5 and Wide Open West Channel 10. Clinton Township will air the TV Insider Show at various times during the last week of every month. Roseville can see the TV Insider Show on Comcast Channel 18.

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## Coffee Hours

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\*Please note that since the District Office is in Roseville, I do not have set coffee hours in Roseville. However, I encourage you to visit the Roseville office. We even have a coffee pot. Everyone is welcome to attend the coffee hours and discuss their issues and concerns.

**February 27**  
**7-9 p.m.**

Location: Clinton-Macomb Public Library  
(35891 Gratiot)  
Clinton Township

**March 6**  
**7-9 p.m.**

Location: Sterling Heights Public Library  
(40255 Dodge Park)  
Sterling Heights

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## Contact My Office

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**Website:** <http://www.senate.mi.gov/switalski>

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### Lansing Office

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### District Office

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